



THE DAILY TIMES

FARMINGTON NEW MEXICO

CAREERS

CLASSIFIEDS

SUBSCRIBE

FEEDBACK

CONTACT US

Site Search:

Enter search term,
hit enter key

Advanced Search

Home

- Business
- Columnists
- Editorials
- How to Write Us
- Letters to the Editor
- Lifestyles
- Local News
- Obituaries
- Outdoors**
- Sports Headlines
- Today's Headlines
- Weather

Subscriptions
Healthcare Crisis

Entertainment

Special
Information



[X]

Thur:

2

Fc

[X]

Article Last Updated: Thursday, March 13, 2003 - 9:33:25 AM MST

Book demystifies a legend, adds to Abbey's lore

By Darren Marcy/**Outdoor editor**

Edward Abbey died 14 years ago.

While many will likely honor the passing Friday of one of the greatest (many will immediately argue "the greatest") nature writers ever, others will be learning of Abbey's work for the first time.

The problem, according to those who knew him well, is that not many books about the great writer tell the whole story.

Clearly Abbey's books have contributed to the lore of the West, the love of nature, the attempts to save what's left of the desert lands he loved so much, and many other causes.

But his own words often left Abbey with a reputation some deserved, some created for literary effect.

James Cahalan's book, "Edward Abbey: A Life," has been heralded as the first book that doesn't simply heap love on, or chastise, Abbey, but seriously examines who he was as a writer and as a man.

Edward Abbey's legend was solidified with his fictional novel, "The Monkey Wrench Gang," an entertaining and inspirational work of literary and environmental hooliganism.

But true fans of nature and nature writing will quickly point to "Desert Solitaire" as his finest work, a passionate and defiant account of a desert life lived while working in southeastern Utah and the protection of canyon country against any who would defile it.

Most fans of Abbey, however, know little about the man beyond these two books, except for the lore that surrounds him some true, some legend.

Cahalan attempts to set the record straight.

Beginning with the fact that Abbey's supposed locations of his birth and death are both misstated more often than not.

ARTICLE OPTIONS

[X] PRINT ARTICLE

[X] EMAIL ARTICLE

[X] LINK ARTICLE

OTHER ARTICLES IN THIS SECTION

3/13/2003

- [Staying active has led local man to the top](#)
- [Outdoor Calendar](#)
- [Commission names new Game and Fish director](#)
- [Outdoor News](#)
- [Outdoor Notes](#)
- [Out and About](#)
- [Sims to give all sides a voice on outdoor issues](#)
- [Skiing report](#)

[X]



NM C

NM N

- Alarm
- News
- Carls
- Curre
- Dem
- Las (
- Ruid
- Silve
- New

New

- More
- 4C B
- Tech
- Emp
- Loca

In his introduction, Cahalan points out that Abbey, himself, misled people to believe he had been born in Home, Pa., and lived late in his life and died in Oracle, Ariz.

Not true, Cahalan writes, backed up by documented evidence.

Abbey was born in Indiana, Pa., Jan. 29, 1927, and he died March 14, 1989.

Doug Peacock, Abbey's inspiration for his character George Washington Heyduke in "The Monkey Wrench Gang," was with him when he died, just before sunrise, in the Arizona desert, near his home outside Tucson.

Peacock, a Green Beret medic who turned in two tours in Vietnam, said Abbey's death was "the bravest dying" he had ever seen.

Cahalan draws from hundreds of sources, including everything Abbey ever published and many more sources that never were journals, letters, videotape, audiotape and manuscripts. He interviewed more than 100 people who knew Abbey.

This book is so well researched and documented, that of 357 pages, only 275 are text, with 82 pages of bibliography, acknowledgements and credits.

The work also includes 30 photos of Abbey throughout his life.

By talking to Abbey's former wives, living relatives, and those who were closest to him, Cahalan paints the best picture yet of the man.

For example, Abbey is often portrayed as antagonistic, cranky, anti-government and unchanging over his years.

But Cahalan describes an affectionate man who grew internally as times changed, sometimes altering opinions as complex situations required.

Along the way, Cahalan changed too.

He begins to understand why Abbey loved the West, why he was so passionate about the environment, why his friends were so loyal as to give him an illegal burial in the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness in southern Arizona, and why legions of "monkey wrenchers" continue to follow Abbey's lead.

Is Cahalan's book "the" complete Ed Abbey biography?

Only Abbey could have written that. But from all accounts, this is the next best thing.

This book will show the most devoted Abbey fan a new wrinkle or two about their hero. It might dissuade some criticism over Abbey's less savory characteristics. And, perhaps, grow the numbers of those who appreciate the man and his work.

Information: <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/> or (800) 426-3797.

Darren Marcy: darrenm@daily-times.com

"Edward Abbey: A Life"

By James Cahalan

6 1/2 X 9 1/2, 357 pages

University of Arizona Press, \$27.95 hardback, 16.95 paperback

Information: <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/> or (800) 426-3797



RETURN TO TOP

© 1999-2003 MediaNews Group, Inc.